

# Stuart C. Aitken

Definitions: My research interests include film and media, critical social theory, qualitative methods, children, families and communities. The titles of some of my books help define my interests, they include *Young People, Border Spaces and Revolutionary Imaginations* (Routledge 2011), *Qualitative Geographies* (Sage 2010), *The Awkward Spaces of Fathering* (Ashgate, 2009), *Global Childhoods* (Routledge 2008), *Philosophies, People, Places and Practices* (Sage 2004), *Geographies of Young People: The Morally Contested Spaces of Identity* (Routledge 2001), *Family Fantasies and Community Space* (Rutgers University Press, 1998), *Place, Space, Situation and Spectacle: A Geography of Film* (Rowman and Littlefield, 1994) and *Putting Children in Their Place* (1994, Washington DC: Association of American Geographers). I have also published over 200 papers in academic journals including the *Annals of the AAG*, *Geographical Review*, *Ecological Modelling*, *Antipode*, *Transactions of the IBG*, *CaGIS*, *Society and Space*, *The Journal of Geography* and *Environment and Planning A* as well as in various edited book collections and encyclopedias. I am also very interested in activism and policy. I have worked for the United Nations on issues of children's rights, migration and dislocation.

Tools: My work focuses on ethnographic and qualitative research methodologies. I am particularly interested in issues related to affect and complexity, and for quite some time now have been inspired by the ground-breaking work of Arturo Escobar and Elizabeth Grosz who in turn are heavily influenced by geo-philosopher, Gilles Deleuze, whose work has guided my research for many years. Some of the qualitative research methods I've developed of late focus on participatory and deep mapping, which uses cartographic (often non-Cartesian) representations to illicit responses from ethnographic participants.

Types of research questions I ask: The most recent proposal I wrote to study the izbrisani "erased" children of Slovenia posed the following questions. 1) What are the roles of children of the izbrisani at the interface between families, communities and the public sphere and what are the key variables influencing these roles? I anticipate that there will be meaningful variations in the composition of izbrisani families that will influence the roles of young people (e.g. immigration histories, education of parents, number of adults and children in the household, location of extended family members, and political and community participation). Some of the types of involvement I anticipate young people exhibiting are: encountering problems that require greater family engagement with institutions; instigating political or community involvement of other family members; acting as a mediator between institutions (e.g. school, banks, and hospitals) and parents. 2) How do young people facilitate or impede the civic and political involvement of their parents and family networks? When young people are involved in their community or in debates over public issues, are they catalysts for family change? Does their engagement promote the civic involvement of other family members? How does the work of young people as institutional mediators encourage, restrict, or influence the political and civic incorporation of other family members? What place-based factors particularly encourage or restrict the influence of young people on the a family's political mobilization ?

Mentoring and collaborative work: The bulk of my work is collaborative. Every 2-3 years I write a single-authored book and at least once a year I write a single authored article. The rest are joint publications, often with students.

Example of my disciplinary approach:

Aitken, Stuart C., Kate Swanson, Fernando Bosco and Tom Herman (2011) *Young People, Border Spaces and Revolutionary Imaginations*. New York and London: Routledge. This book is based on a collaborative project funded by the Canadian government that brought together US, Mexican and Canadian scholars interested in youth and border issues

DeLyser, Dydia, Steve Herbert, Stuart Aitken, Mike Crang and Linda McDowell (2010) *Qualitative Geography*. London, Thousand Oaks & New Delhi: Sage Publications. This popular text-book is based on an international collaboration between 29 geographer interested in qualitative methods.

Aitken, Stuart C. (2009). *The Awkward Spaces of Fathering*. Aldershot: Ashgate Press. This book is based on 15 years of ethnographic work with a variety of different fathers in the San Diego region